CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1.   A method for securing a portable electronic device, comprising:

2   (a)   generating a security message;

3   (b)   transmitting said security message to said portable electronic device;

4   (c)   performing a destructive action on said portable electronic device in response to

5 said security message.

1 2.   The method of claim 1 wherein said destructive action includes erasing memory.

1 3.   The method of claim 1 wherein said destructive action includes destroying a portion of said

2 portable electronic device.

1 4.   The method of claim 1 wherein said destructive action prevents said portable electronic

2 device from transmitting or releasing information.

1 5.   The method of claim 1 wherein (a) includes digitally signing said security message.

1 6.   The method of claim 5 further including the portable electronic device verifying the digital

2 signature.

1 7.   The method of claim 5 using an encryption key to digitally sign the security message.

1 8. The method of claim 7 wherein said encryption key is stored in an encrypted form before

2 being used to digitally sign the security message.

1 9. The method of claim 6 wherein a person or entity is authorized to cause (b) to happen and

2 only that person or entity is capable of causing said encrypted key to be decrypted so as to be used

3 to digitally sign the security message.

1 10. The method of claim 1 wherein (b) occurs after a request has been received to perform the

2 destructive action.

1 11. The method of claim 10 wherein a person or entity is authorized to cause (b) to happen and

2 (b) occurs after said requesting person or entity is verified.

1 12. The method of claim 1 further including encrypting the security message and said portable

2 device decrypts the encrypted security message.

1 13. The method of claim 1 further including digitally signing said security message and

2 including a unique value that changes each time (a) is performed.

1 14. The method of claim 13 further including receiving said digitally signed security message

2 and authenticating the message using said unique value.

1 15. The method of claim 13 wherein said unique value includes a time stamp.

1 16. The method of claim 13 wherein said unique value includes a random number.

1 17. The method of claim 13 wherein said unique value includes a non-repeating sequence

2 number.

1 18. The method of claim 1 further including permitting the destructive action to be aborted

2 once the security message is received by said portable electronic device.

1 19. The method of claim 18 wherein permitting the destructive action to be aborted includes

2 providing the portable electronic device with an abort key that is verified by the portable electronic

3 device.

1 20. The method of claim 1 further including permitting a specified number of tasks to be

2 performed by the portable electronic device before (c) is performed.

1 21. The method of claim 1 further including permitting tasks to be performed by said portable

2 electronic device for a specified time period before (c) is performed.

1 22. The method of claim 1 further including permitting a specified number of tasks to be

2 performed during a specified period of time and performing (c) after either said specified number

3 of tasks have been performed or the specified time period has expired.

1 23. A portable electronic device, comprising:

2 a CPU;

3 a memory device coupled to said CPU;

4 a decryption key stored in said memory device;

5 an input/output ("I/O") module coupled to said CPU which receives messages from an

6 external security station;

7 wherein said CPU receives security messages from said security station via said I/O

8 module and, in response, performs a destructive action.

1 24. The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said destructive action includes erasing

2 said memory device.

1 25. The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said destructive action prevents said

2 portable electronic device from transmitting information.

1 26. The portable electronic device of claim 23, wherein said security messages received at said

2 I/O module include a digital signature and said CPU verifies the digital signature.

1 27. The portable electronic device of claim 26 wherein said CPU uses said decryption key to

2 verify the digital signature.

1 28. The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU verifies a unique value

2 included in said security message, said unique value capable of being different each time the

3 portable electronic device receives a security message.

1   29.   The portable electronic device of claim 28 wherein said CPU authenticates the security

2   message using said unique value.

1   30.   The portable electronic device of claim 28 wherein said unique value includes a time

2   stamp.

1   31.   The portable electronic device of claim 28 wherein said unique value includes a random

2   number.

1   32.   The method of claim 28 wherein said unique value includes a non-repeating sequence

2   number.

1   33.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits the destructive action

2   to be aborted once the security message is received by said portable electronic device.

1   34.   The portable electronic device of claim 33 wherein said CPU permits entry of an abort key

2   to cause the destructive action to be aborted.

1   35.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits a specified number of

2   tasks to be performed by the portable electronic device before performing said destructive action.

1   36.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits tasks to be performed

2   for a specified time period before said destructive action is performed.

1   37.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said CPU permits a specified number of

2   tasks to be performed for a specified time period and, after either the specified number of tasks

3   have been performed or the specified time period has elapsed, said CPU performs said destructive

4   action.

1   38.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said decryption key cannot be

2   overwritten.

1   39.   The portable electronic device of claim 23 wherein said decryption key cannot be copied.

1   40.   A security station through which a user of a portable electronic device can initiate a

2   security response associated with the portable electronic device, comprising:

3   a CPU;

4   a registry of user information accessible by said CPU and including an identifier value

5   associated with the portable electronic device; and

6   a communication port to facilitate communication with the portable electronic device;

7   wherein said CPU generates a security message which is transmitted through the

8   communication port to the portable electronic device to cause the portable electronic device to

9   perform a destructive security action.

1   41.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said CPU digitally signs said security message

2   with a key associated with the user.

1   42.   The security station of claim 41 wherein said CPU encrypts said security message with said

2   key.

1   43.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said CPU encrypts said security message with a

2   key associated with the user.

1   44.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2   electronic device to erase its data storage.

1   45.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2   electronic device to cease transmitting data.

1   46.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2   electronic device to preclude access to any stored in the portable electronic device.

1   47.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message causes said portable

2   electronic device to report location information to the security station.

1   48.   The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message permits the portable

2   electronic device to perform a specified number of tasks after which the portable electronic device

3   performs said destructive action.

1 49. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message permits the portable

2 electronic device to perform tasks for a specified amount of time after which the portable

3 electronic device performs said destructive action.

1 50. The security station of claim 40 wherein said security message permits the portable

2 electronic device to perform a specified number of tasks for a specified amount of time, and after

3 either the specified number of tasks have been performed or the specified amount of time has

4 expired, the portable electronic device performs said destructive action.

1 51. The security station of claim 40 wherein the security message can be aborted by the

2 portable electronic device.